

5-2019

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Recommended Citation

Ramos, Jessica, "CASA Youth Resource Guide" (2019). *Capstone Projects and Master's Theses*. 518.
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CASA Youth Resource Guide

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May 9, 2019

Abstract

C.A.S.A, Court Appointed Special Advocates, of Monterey County is a local nonprofit whose mission is “to train and support community volunteers who advocate for abused or neglected children placed in foster care, upholding the children's rights while pursuing a safe and permanent home” (CASA of Monterey County, n.d.). Foster youth in Monterey County do not have enough online resources that provide information on education, employment, and housing. Through this project, CASA added resources to their website to help foster youth succeed, and overtime the success of how useful the resources were for foster youth and CASA team members will be identified. For the future, it is recommended that the agency makes interns accountable for updating the resources in order to provide foster youth with the most accurate and helpful information.

Key Words: foster youth, online resources, housing, education, employment

Agency Description

CASA of Monterey County is a local nonprofit whose mission is “to train and support community volunteers who advocate for abused or neglected children placed in foster care, upholding the children's rights while pursuing a safe and permanent home” (CASA of Monterey County, n.d.). CASA of Monterey County provides services to children placed in the foster care system ranging from ages five to twenty-one. They only serve foster youth who live in Monterey County, unless they have moved placements and their case still remains in Monterey County. The majority of the population CASA of Monterey County serves is Hispanic (83%).

Problem Description

The social problem of this project is that former foster youth aging out of the foster care system are not succeeding. Based on the National Foster Youth Institute, “there is less than a 3% chance for foster youth to earn a college degree at any point in their lifetime” (May, 17). Twenty percent of children exiting the foster care system instantly become homeless as well (May, 17). Some of the factors contributing to this social problem is poverty in Monterey County and lack of affordable housing. Some of the consequences are homelessness and having no health insurance. As stated above 20% of foster youth instantly become homeless and end up in unstable housing, temporary housing or couch-surfing.

The agency problem is Monterey County foster youth do not have access to the resources they need after aging out of the foster care system. The lack of online resources for foster youth affects the agency’s ability to provide adequate support. With the online resource guide for foster youth CASA of Monterey County has provided additional support for youth in order to help them succeed.

Some alternatives to addressing the problem would be providing foster youth with additional educational support. Another alternative would be having a one on one session with youths who are falling behind and making sure they get the support needed during class sessions. An important alternative is for CASA advocates to talk about college with their foster youth as well as housing and job opportunities as they get older.

Problem Statement:		
Causes/Risk Factors To Broader Health Problem	Broader “Macro-Level” Health/Social Problem	Consequences To Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of affordable housing • Forced to work low-paying jobs • Poverty 	<p>Social problem: Former foster youth aging out of the system are not succeeding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness • No health insurance
Causes To Agency Problem	Agency-Specific “Micro-Level” Problem Addresses By Project	Consequences To Agency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not having readily available resources • Monterey County is expensive 	<p>Monterey County foster youth do not have access to the resources they need after aging out of the foster care system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not providing adequate support • Goals not met

Project Description

CASA of Monterey County has developed a new website. The intern has added a resource guide for foster youth aging out of the system onto the website. This resource guide provides housing, education, and employment resources for foster youth. It is also a resource for CASA's and caregivers who are a big part of these children's lives. This project involved a lot of research and communication with other youth services/programs in the County. Research was important considering that there are many other sites that had the information the intern needed. For example, the Monterey County Office of Education has a similar mission and vision for foster youth as CASA of Monterey County ("Foster Youth Services", 2014). Researching what services they provide for foster youth was very helpful.

Project Implementation

As the intern started to implement the project she discussed with Kathryn what resources are appropriate for the website. Considering that the information the intern provided is on the main CASA website for others to see. When individuals look at the website it is important that everything represents the values, the mission, and the population served as CASA of Monterey County.

The implementation process consisted of meeting with a representative of the Employment Development Department who helps provide universal job resources for clients. Alan the representative provided the intern with many helpful job resources in the County. The intern completed the education section first, then housing, and employment resources. Finding affordable housing in Monterey County for foster youth was difficult for the intern. However, the

intern managed to find different types of low-income housing and short-term housing support for foster youth.

Scope of Work		
Title: CASA Youth Resource Guide		
Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/deadlines
1. Discuss capstone project ideas with mentor	1. Final capstone project idea approved	1. Sept 2018
2. Discuss resources already available with Edna	2. Resources approved	2. Oct 2018
3. Talk to Kathryn about resources ideas/website	3. Approve resource tabs	3. Oct 2018
4. Research information already available to youth	4. Get approved by mentor/Edna	4. Nov 2018
5. Ideas how this will efficiently be implemented to the new website	5. Kathryn approved	5. Nov-Dec 2018
6. Have many resources and services for each section	6. Reviewed by mentor/Edna/Kathryn	6. Jan 2019
7. Meet with mentor	7. Discussion on capstone	7. Jan 2019
8. Finalize resource tabs	8. Mentor approval	8. April 4, 2019
9. Upload all resources	9. Get resources on website	9. April 4,

		2019
10. Prepare capstone presentation	10. Instructor approval & Dress Rehearsal of final capstone presentation	10. April 26, 2019
11. Capstone Festival	11. Final presentation at Capstone Festival	11. May 16, 2019

Assessment Plan

The biggest outcome goal the mentor and intern had for this capstone project is that the resource guide benefits foster youth who are about to age out of the foster care system. The goal is for these resources to be a guide for youths that may be unsure of how to apply for housing, how to find and apply for a job, and information about higher education. Not only are these resources beneficial to those who are about to age out but even for youths to use as a guideline for success at a young age.

A great outcome goal for the staff of CASA in Monterey County is having a resources guide that can benefit current and new CASA advocates. This capstone project is also a resource for community members and non-profits.

The intern will not be able to see the expected outcome during her remaining time at the internship. The intern had her mentor and other supervisors in the office look over her capstone project and have them give her some feedback, to ensure she reached her expected outcome. Throughout the semester the intern communicated with her mentor and other CASA staff in order to receive the support and resources she needed to provide the best resources available for foster youth.

Findings and Results of Assessment Process

The intern reached her outcome goal which was to provide foster youth with helpful resources. The resources were successfully added to the CASA website. The intern's mentor: Joan Nugent stated, "It looks good to me. The links and logos are all there. It is easy to navigate and there are many helpful resources for foster youth".

Communicating with her mentor throughout the process helped the intern succeed with her project. Having the patience to find quality resources had a huge impact on the success of the project. The intern struggled with managing the new website at first but overcame the challenge by trial and error. Her biggest challenge was finding housing resource in Monterey County. She also struggled with not double working which is providing the same resources other website have such as SAM's Guide of Monterey County.

Recommendations

With this new tool and guide for foster youth and CASA staff, the agency can promote more higher education. Most importantly the agency can let their CASA advocates know about the resources available for their youth, in order for them to provide additional support. Lastly, the intern recommends that CASA of Monterey County has their future interns update the website, to ensure the information is accurate and up to date.

Conclusion

Through this capstone project I've learned many new things about myself and how I can improve my weaknesses. I've improved my professional communication skills through communicating with community members and other CASA staff that I don't regularly see. I've

learned that sometimes it is better to start a project without guidance in order to get the most out of it. When I gained access to the CASA website I was clueless how to manage it. However, after several tries I learned how to manage the website and learned to be more patient. In ten years I will remember the success of this project and how grateful I am to have been able to provide foster youth with online resources that will help them succeed in the future.

I would recommend future intern to not fear asking for more responsibility. Sometimes you may feel like you are doing the same task over and over. It is important that you take charge of your own learning experience and make the most out of it. I'd also recommend an intern to make relationships with other coworkers and interns at their site. Most importantly be on time and know that you are making a difference.

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